TESTAMENT'S ALEX SKOLNICK & ERIC PETERSON

THE BALLAD

The boys from Testament soar over adventurous key changes and complex rhythms, proving there is more to thrash than fast fingers that fly.

LESSON

In the grand tradition of Metallica, Testament is creating thrash for the thinking musician. The guitar team of Alex Skolnick and Eric Peterson have channeled the raw speed and energy of their music into an urgent, coherent and harmonically complex statement about our troubled times. "The Ballad," performed live in the studio, shows off everything that makes this band great.

The first thing I'd like to mention is Skolnick's thoughtful approach to phrase development when soloing. For example, notice how he uses the same "melodic rhythm" on the third and fourth beats of measures 5, 6 and 7, beginning with the 32nd-note triplets (Fig.1). This idea reappears, in a slightly varied form, in measure 13 (Fig. 2). Also notice how he begins measure 7 with the same five notes as measure 6. At the beginning of section D (measures 42 43 and 44) he repeats the melodic rhythm of the first 10 notes (Fig.3). These "musical rhymes" give Skolnick's lines a sense of continuity and structure.

As a rhythm section, Testament applies the same concepts of parallelism and repetition. Look at the beginning of section E (measures 50, 51 and 52) and notice how they begin each measure with the same chord rhythms, altering them each time on the last two beats (Fig.4). This gives the riff a predictable, yet original, quality that satisfies the listener, but still keeps him guessing.

Harmonically, this tune contains some unusual twists. The first two chords (A and G6) are foreign to the prevailing key of F# Mixolydian, as they contain the notes A, G and D (Fig.5). These "outside" chords are borrowed from the parallel Phrygian scale (Fig.6).

Many speed-metal bands have been criticized for using primitive chord changes. Testament takes an enlightened approach to harmony. For example, in the third measure of letter C, the two guitars color the underlying harmony with overlapping arpeggios, suggesting sophisticated "shades" of D minor, such as Dmin6, Dmin9 and Dmin11 (Fig.7). This approach allows the band to utilize a greater variety of harmonies while staying within the basic musical parameters of the style.

Fig. 1

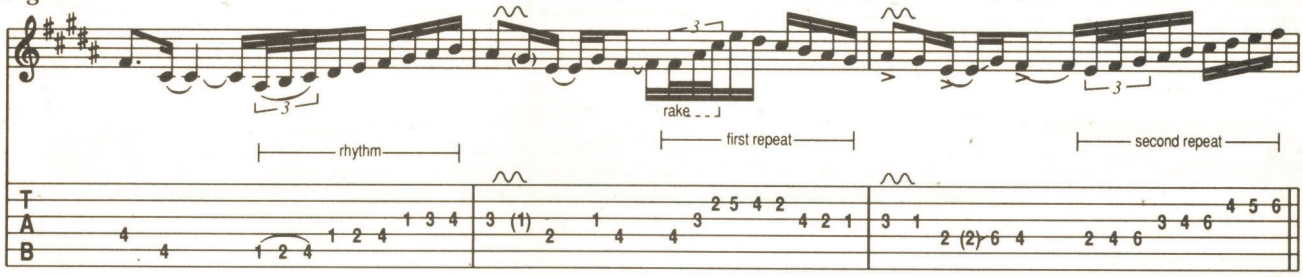



Fig. 2

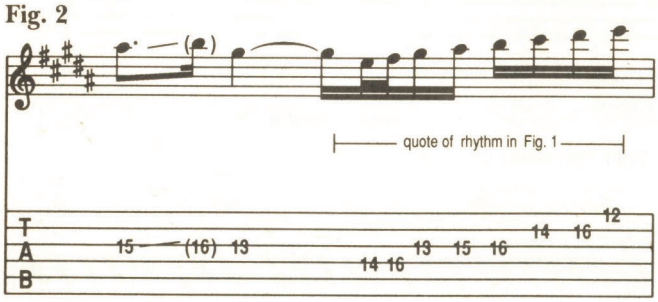


Fig. 3

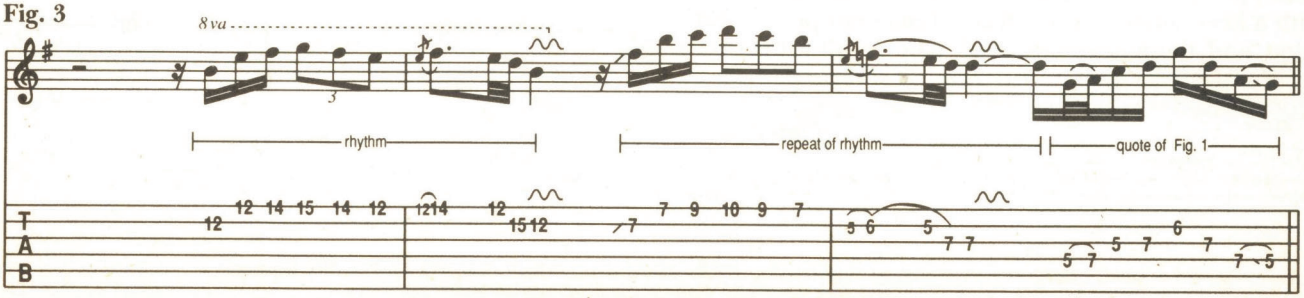



Fig. 4

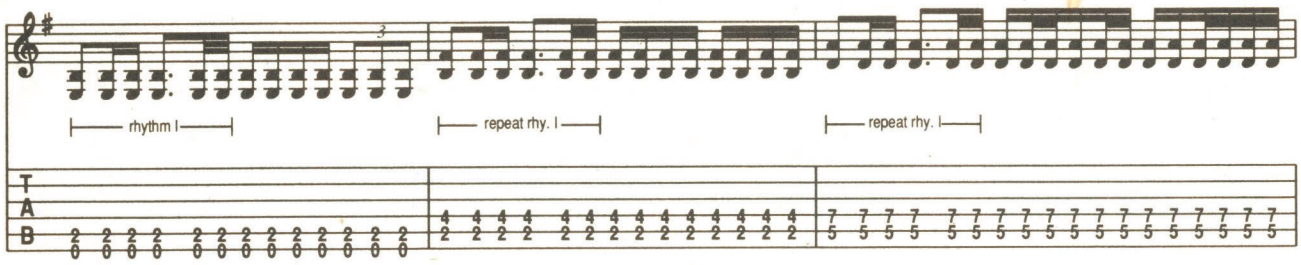



Fig. 5

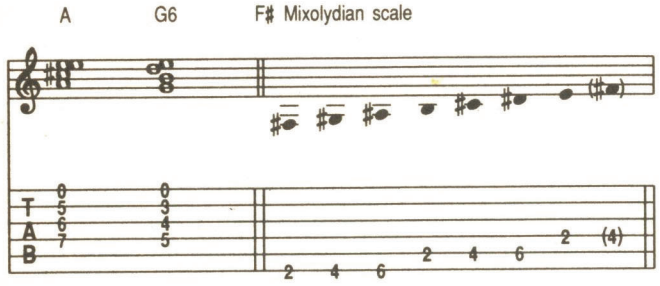


Fig. 6

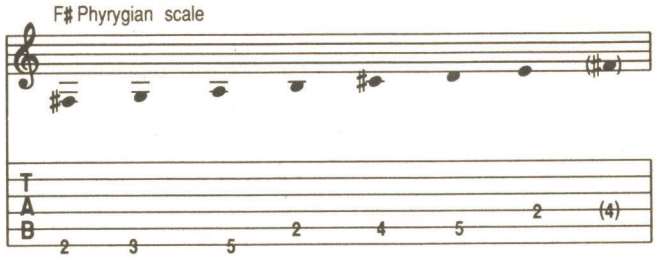
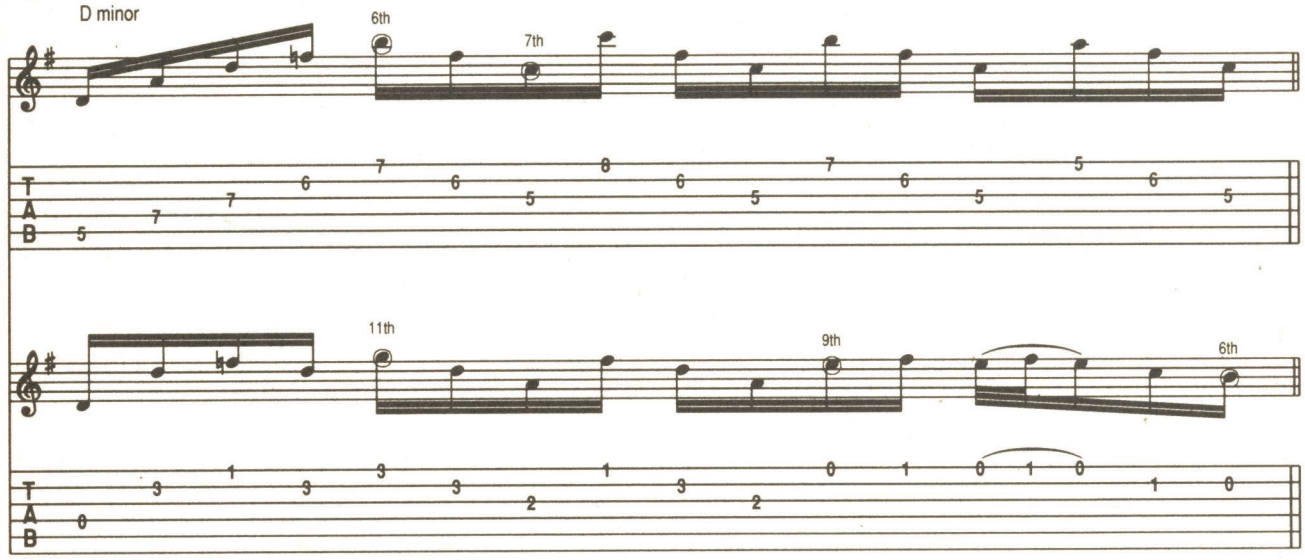
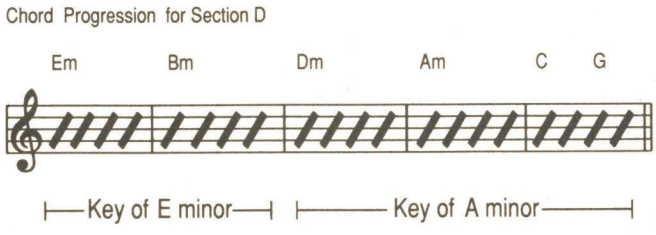


Fig. 7

Another interesting aspect of this song is the series of adventurous key changes that occur during the solo at section D (Fig.8). Most rock guitarists avoid soloing over key changes and would rather stay in one key. Skolnick, however, solos fluently over the modulation from E minor to A minor, pivoting effortlessly on the D minor chord. Note the ease with which he solos through the key change, starting an idea in the first key and ending it in the second (as opposed to merely playing separate ideas in each key).

With a keen awareness for detail, Testament proves that subtlety and thoughtful attention paid to all aspects of music (not just volume and tempo) is what separates a superior band from the mediocre masses.

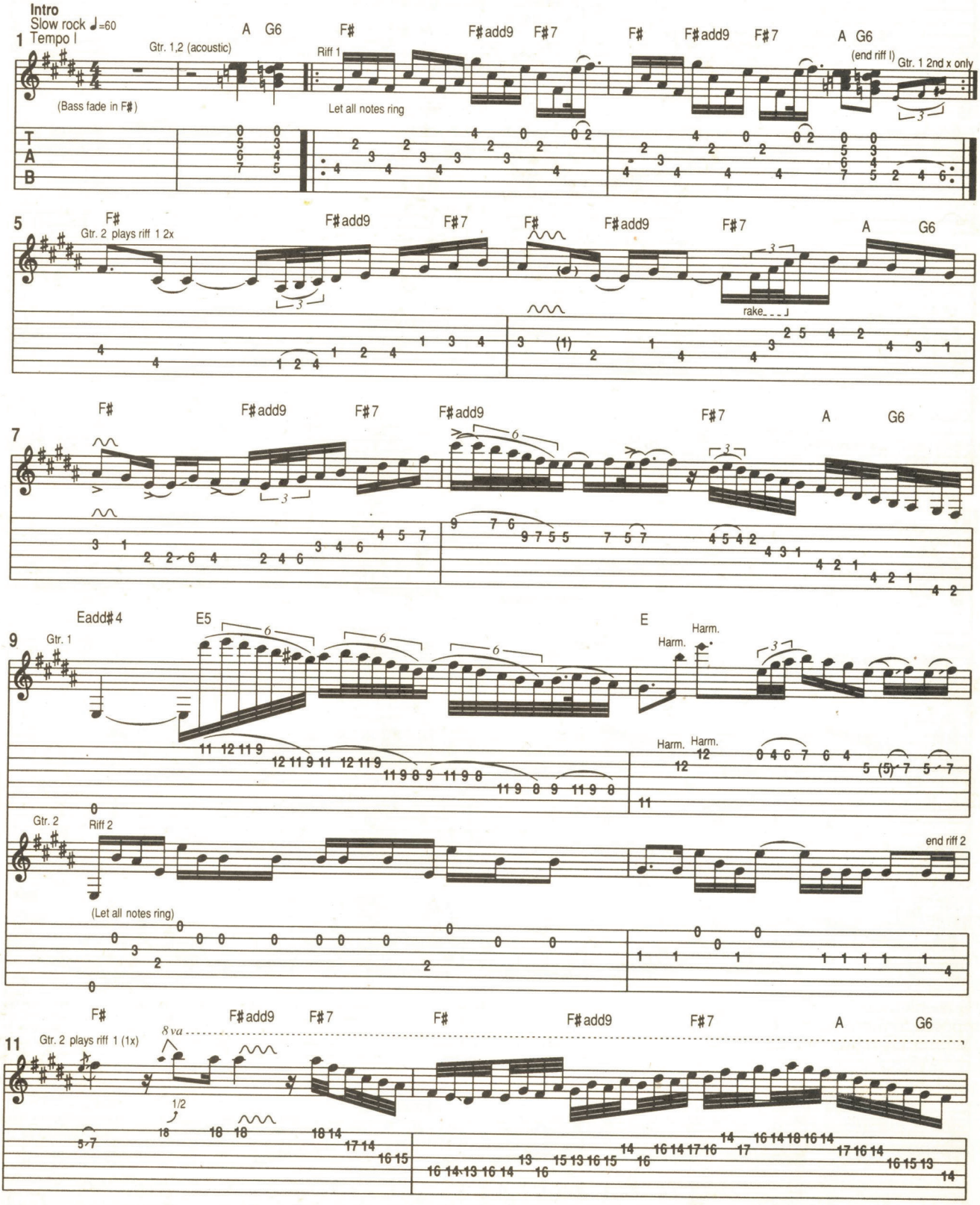
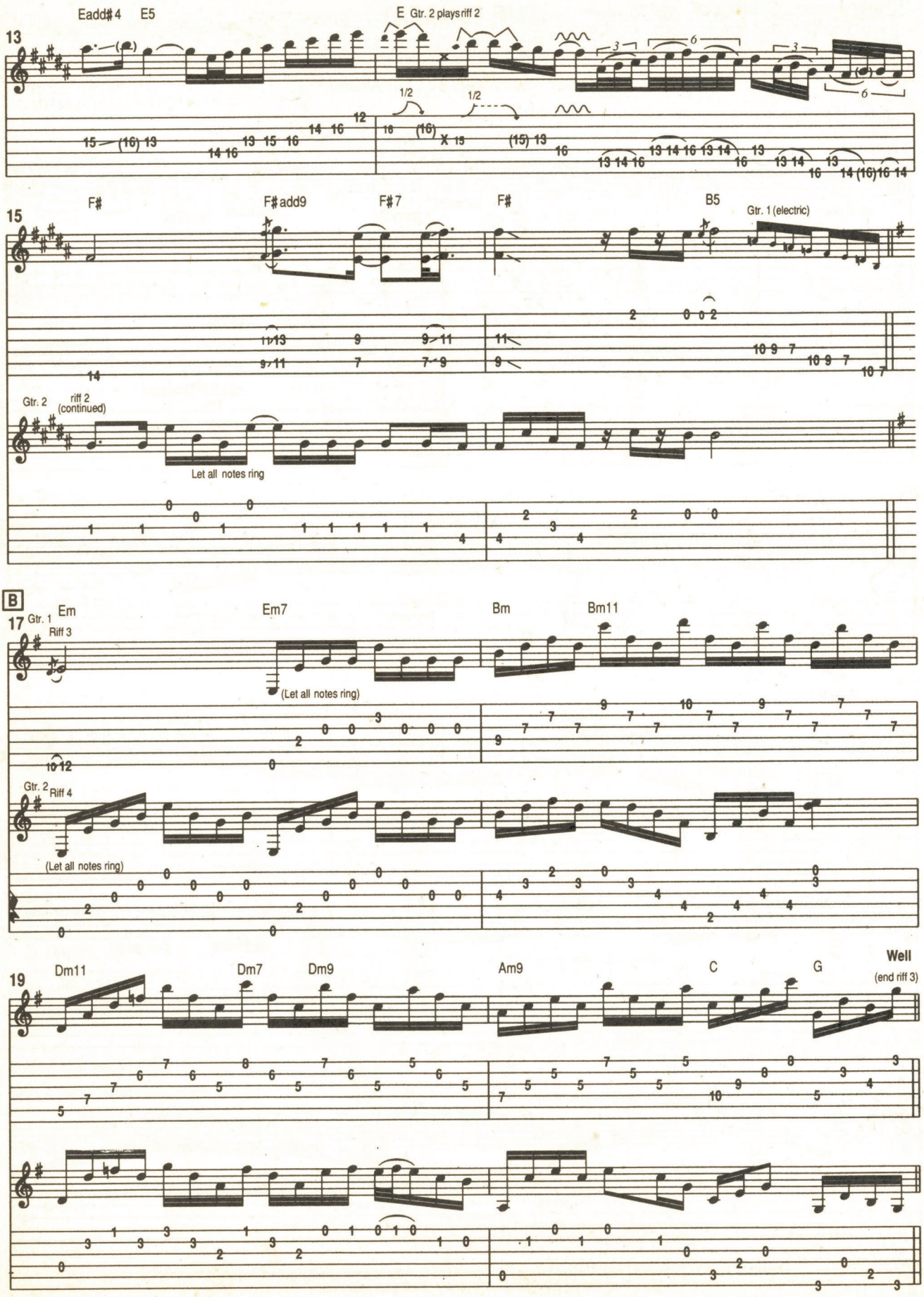
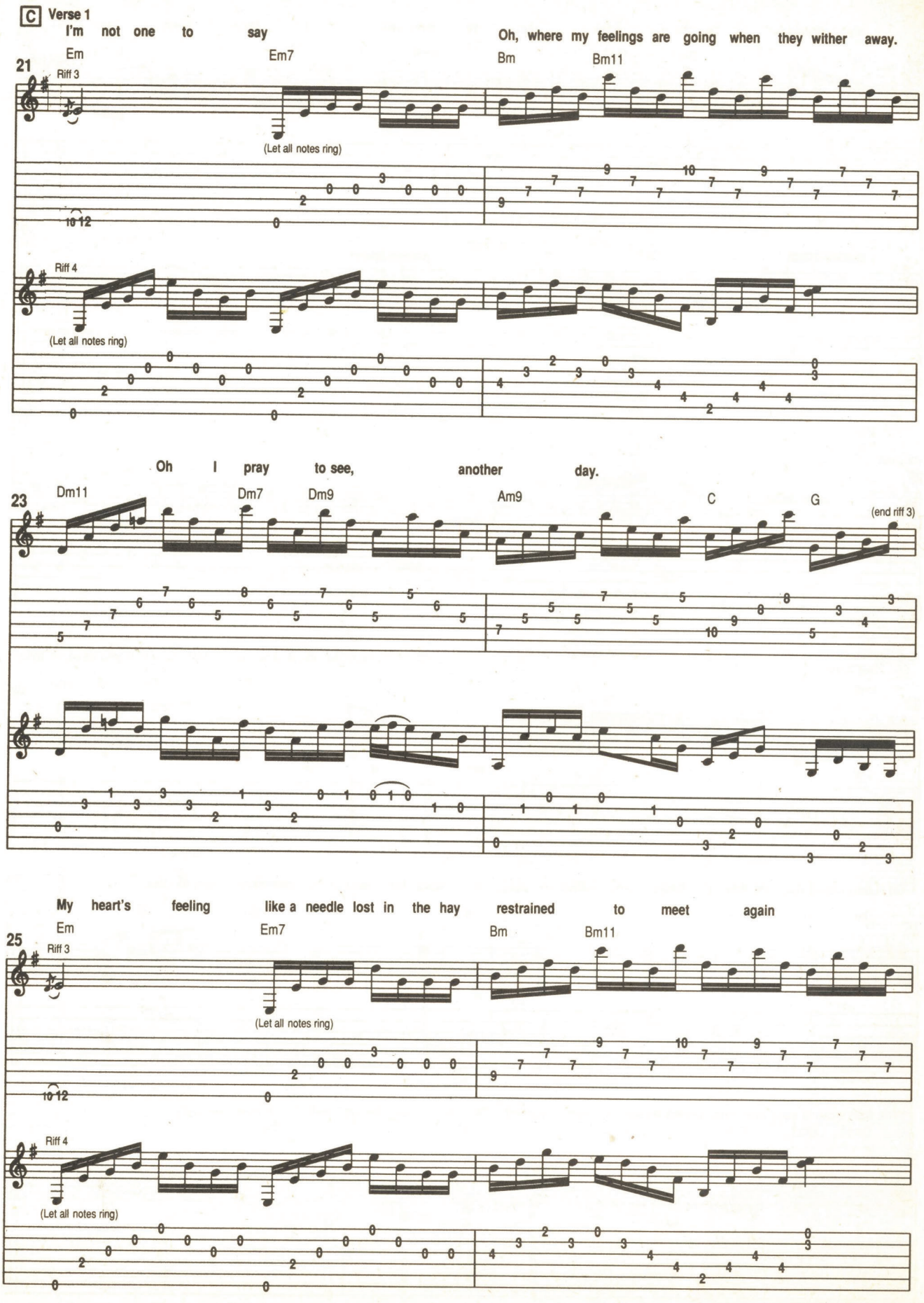
—Chris Amelar

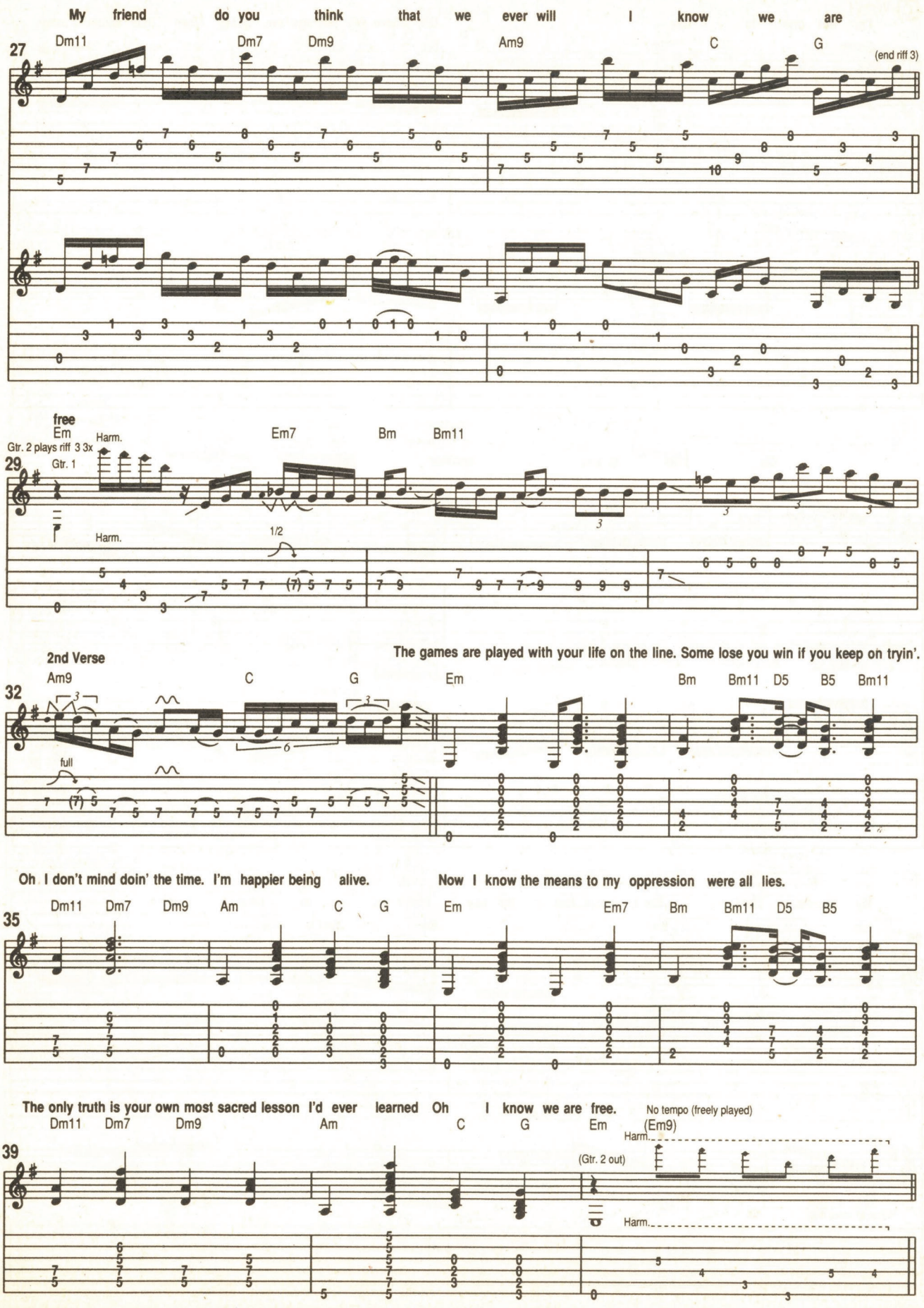
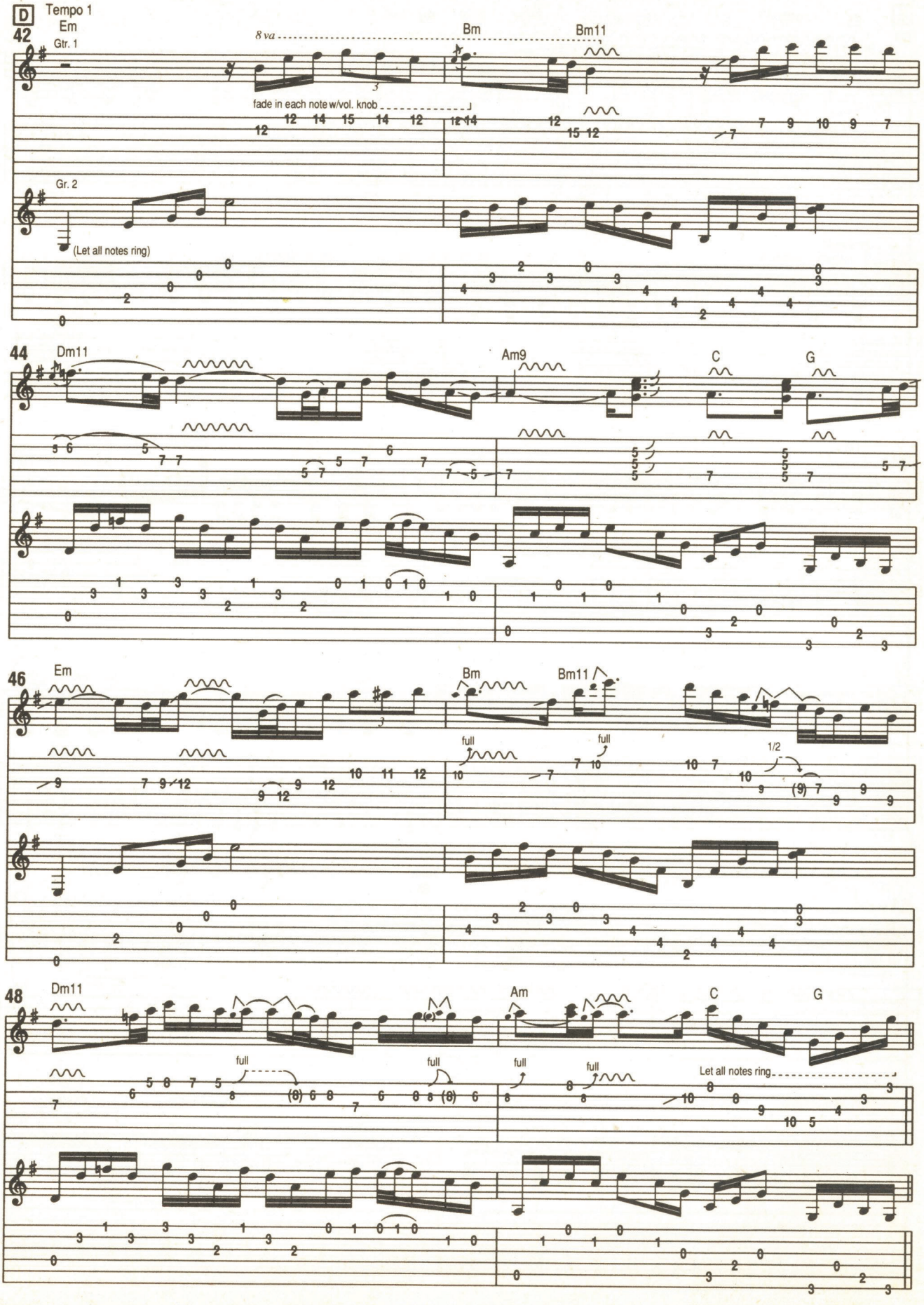
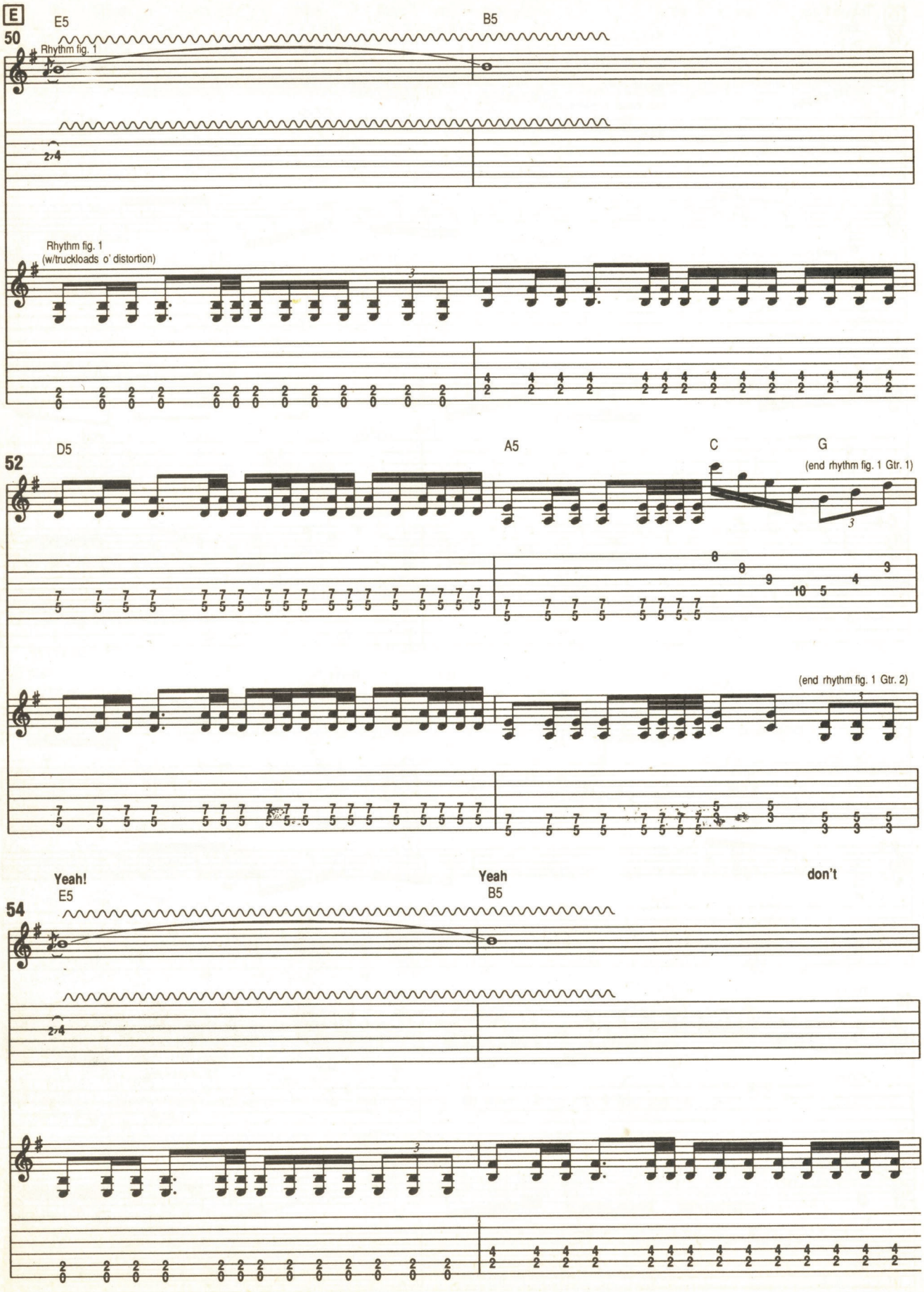
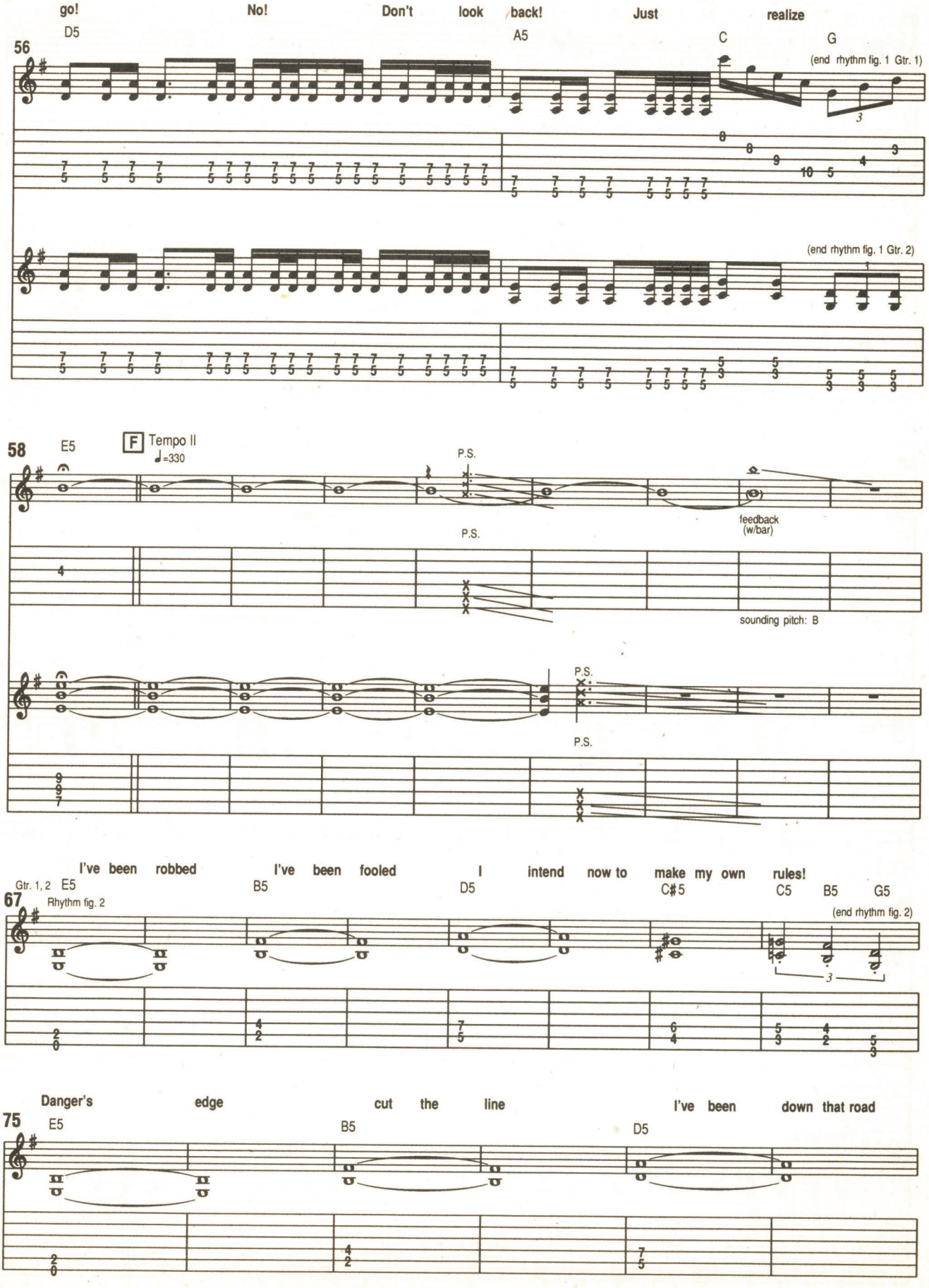
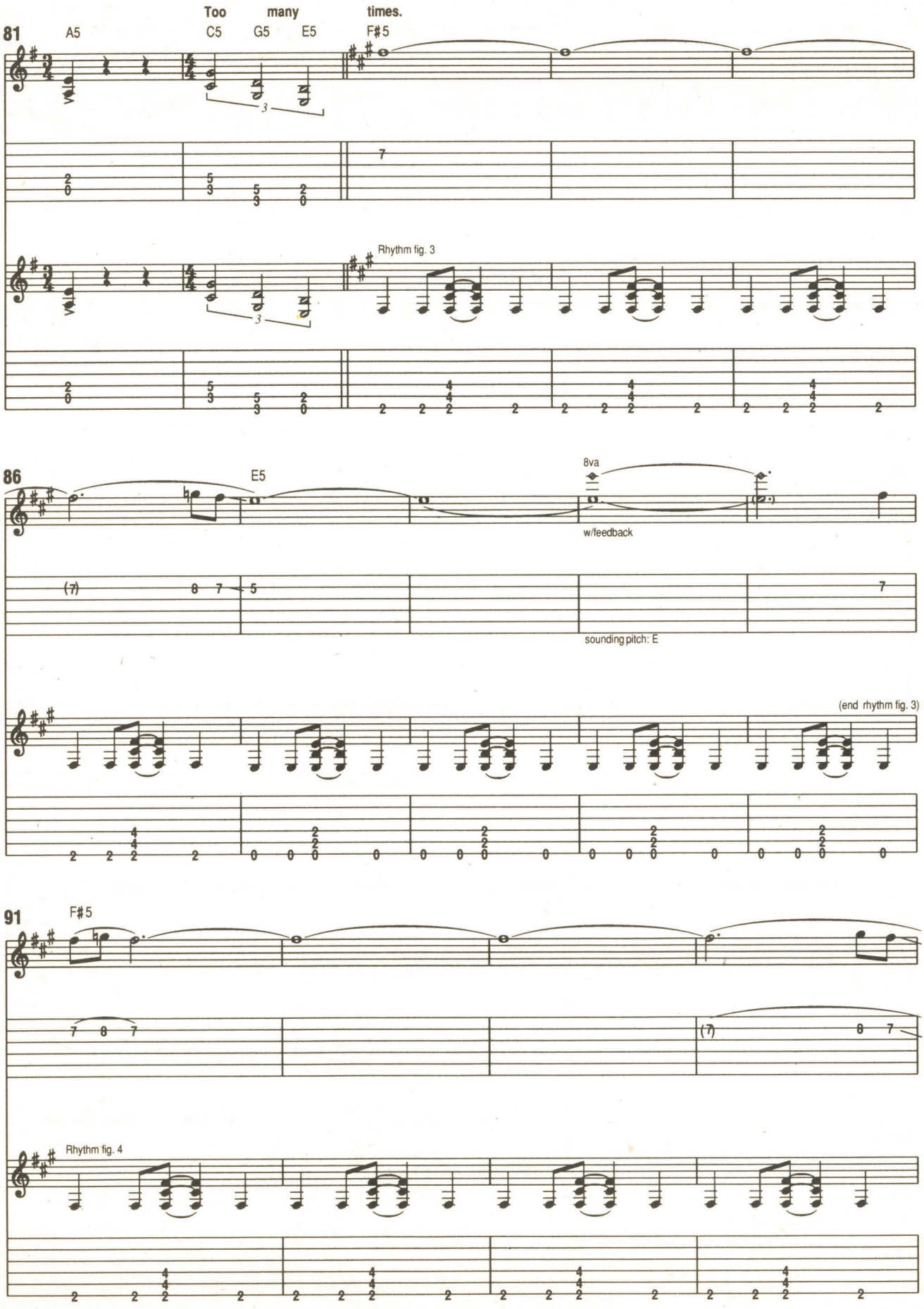
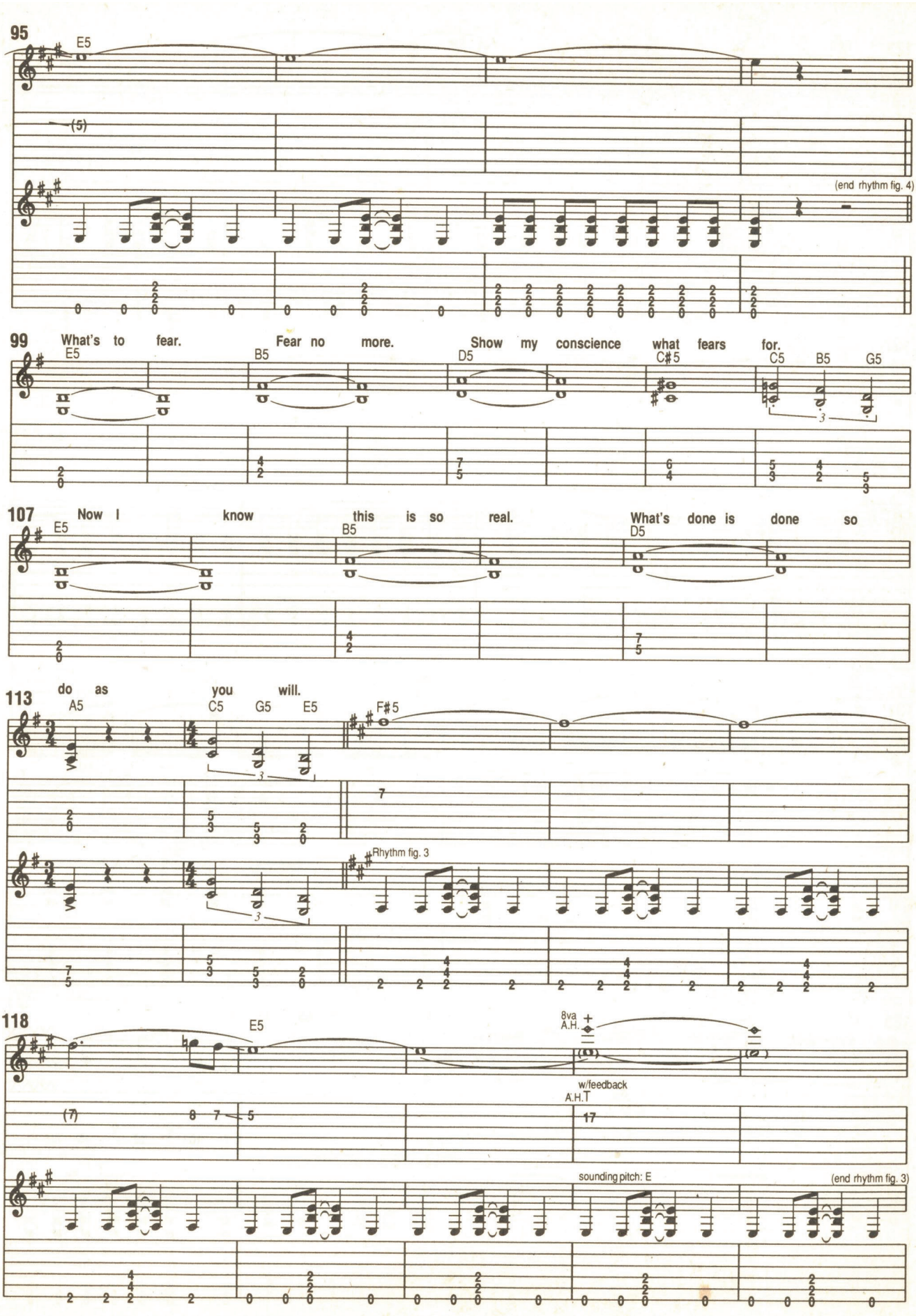
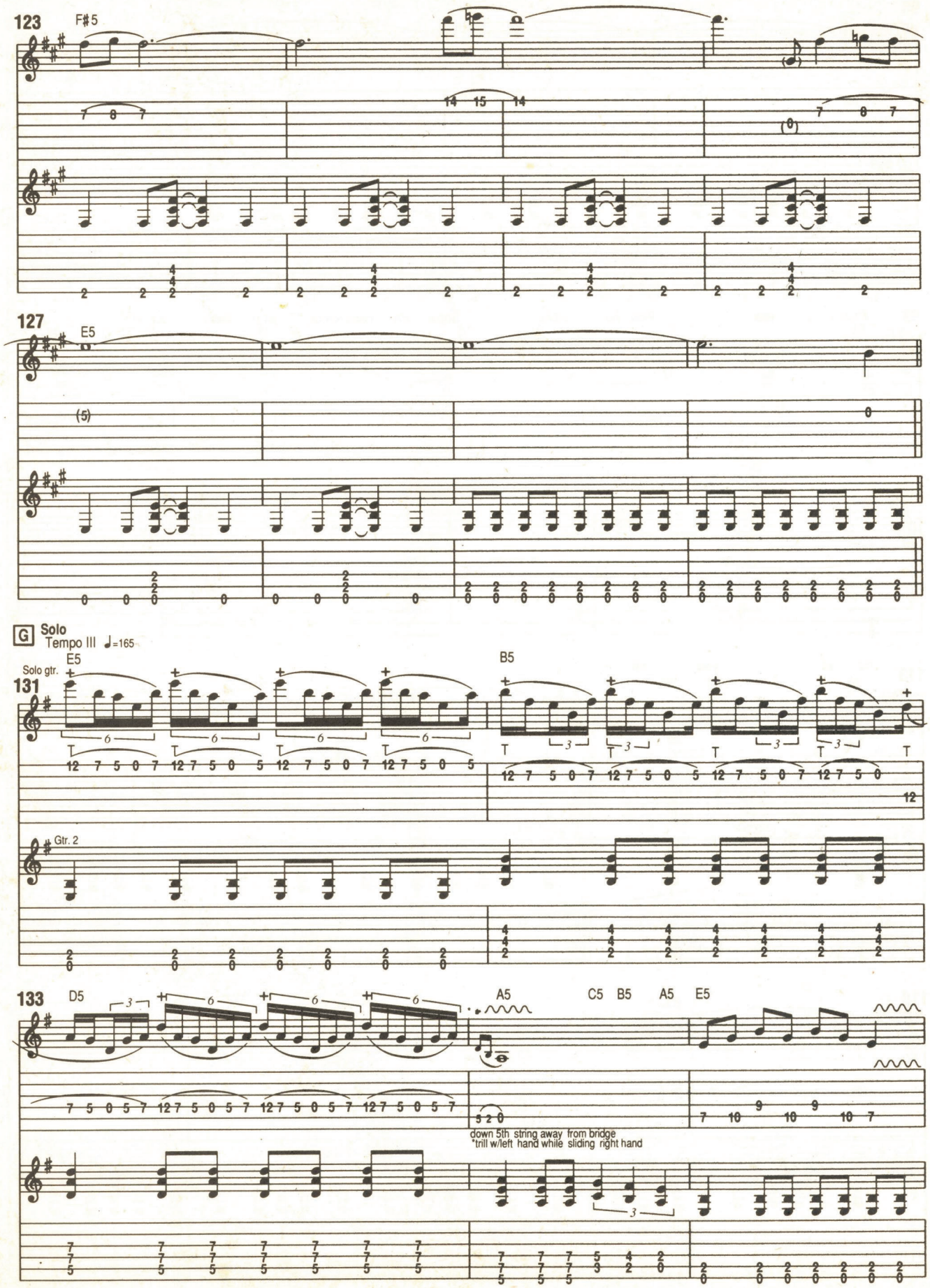
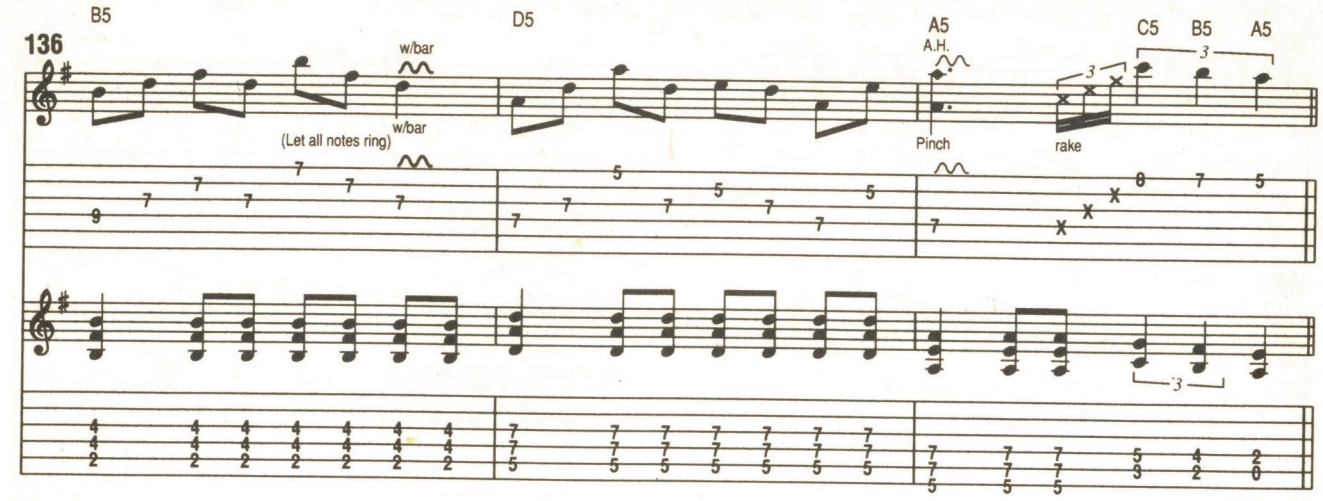
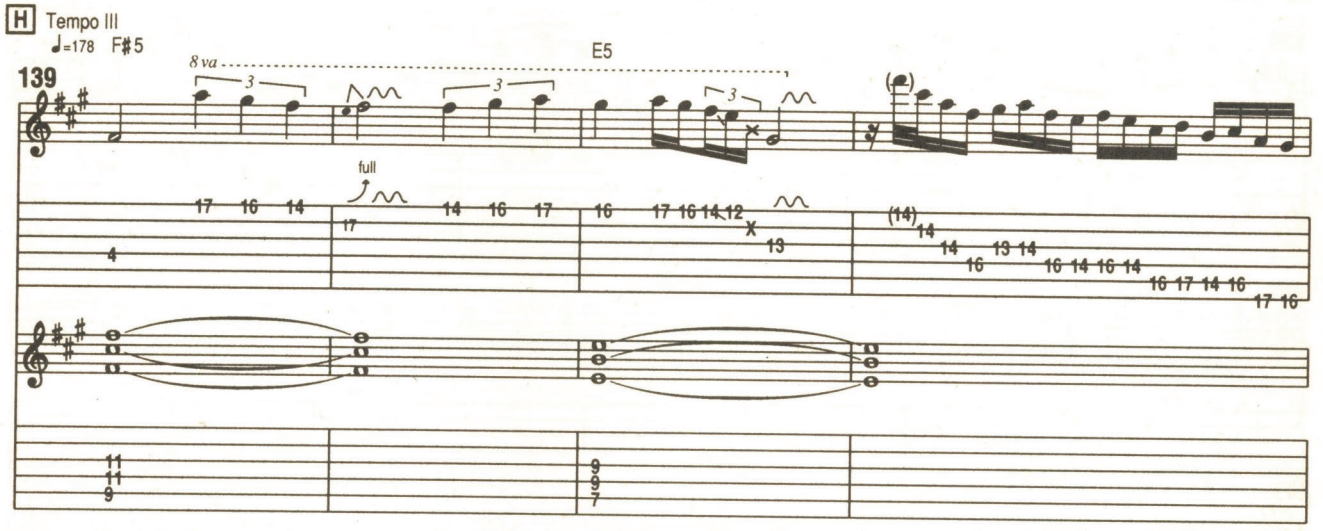
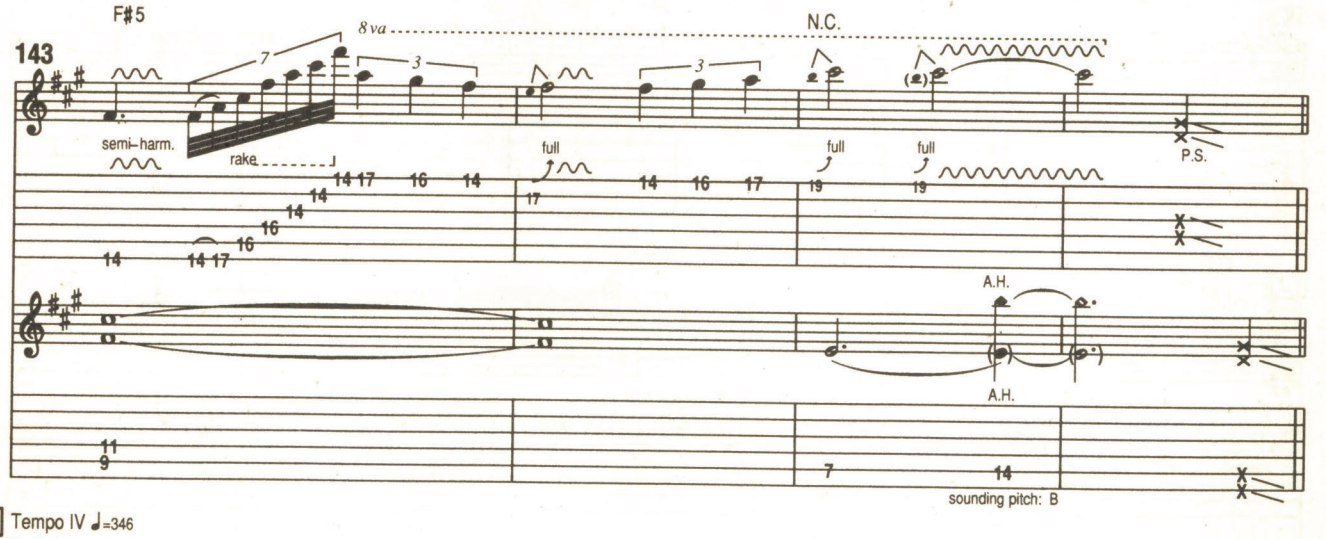
Fig. 8

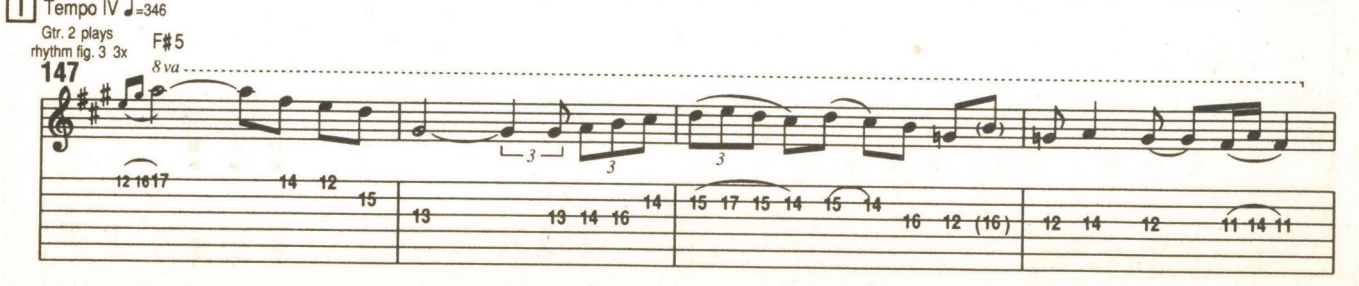
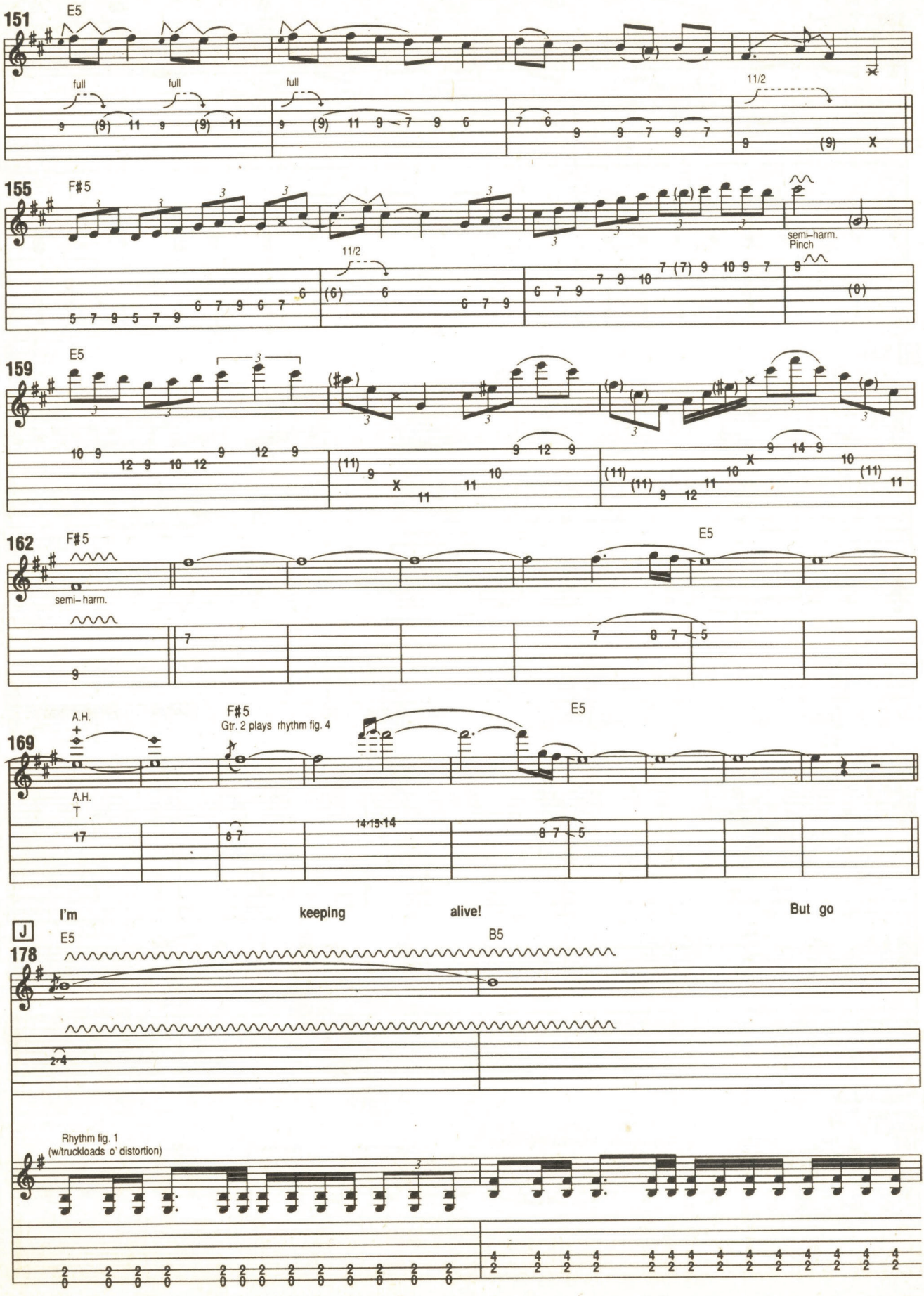
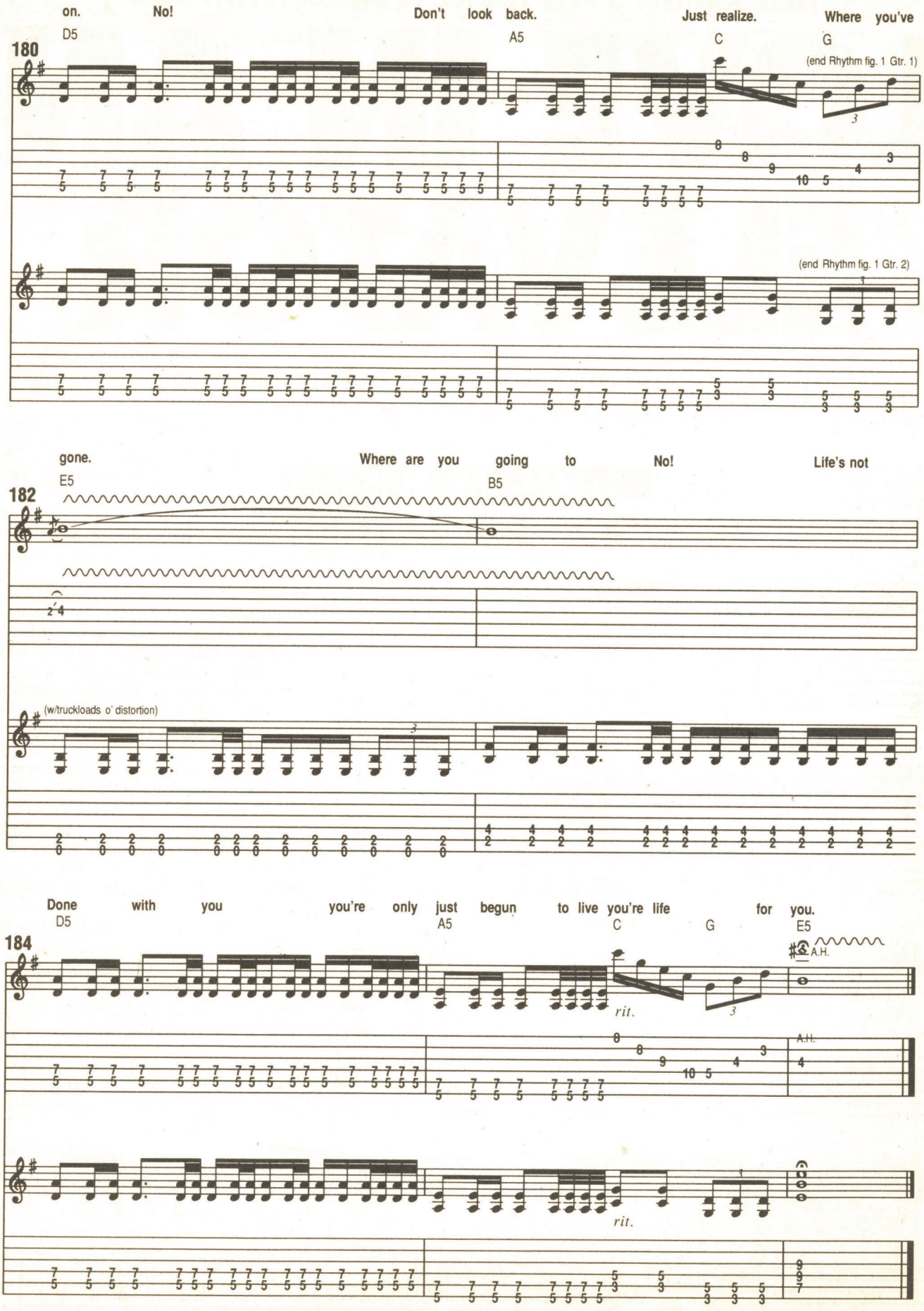


From the Atlantic/Megaforce recording, PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

THE BALLAD

Lyrics by CHUCK BILLY and ALEX SKOLNICK
Music by TESTAMENT
Guitar Transcription by Chris Amelar

© Copyright 1989 ZOMBA ENTERPRISES INC./COTLOD MUSIC (Administered by ZOMBA ENTERPRISES INC.)
International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Eadd#4
E5
E
Gtr. 2 plays riff 2
13
1/2
1/2
F#
F#add9
F#7
F#
B5
Gtr. 1 (electric)
15
Gtr. 2
riff 2
(continued)
Let all notes ring
B
17
Gtr. 1
Riff 3
Em
Em7
Bm
Bm11
(Let all notes ring)
Gtr. 2
Riff 4
(Let all notes ring)
19
Dm11
Dm7
Dm9
Am9
C
G
Well
(end riff 3)

C Verse 1
I'm not one to say
Oh, where my feelings are going when they wither away.
Em
Em7
Bm
Bm11
21
Riff 3
(Let all notes ring)
Riff 4
(Let all notes ring)
Oh I pray to see, another day.
Dm11
Dm7
Dm9
Am9
C
G
23
(end riff 3)
My heart's feeling like a needle lost in the hay restrained to meet again
Em
Em7
Bm
Bm11
25
Riff 3
(Let all notes ring)
Riff 4
(Let all notes ring)


My friend do you think that we ever will I know we are
Dm11 Dm7 Dm9 Am9 C G
27
(end riff 3)
free
Em
Gtr. 2 plays riff 3 3x
Harm.
Gtr. 1
Em7 Bm Bm11
29
Harm.
1/2
2nd Verse
The games are played with your life on the line. Some lose you win if you keep on tryin'.
Am9 C G Em Bm Bm11 D5 B5 Bm11
32
full
Oh I don't mind doin' the time. I'm happier being alive.
Now I know the means to my oppression were all lies.
Dm11 Dm7 Dm9 Am C G Em Em7 Bm Bm11 D5 B5
35
The only truth is your own most sacred lesson I'd ever learned Oh I know we are free.
Dm11 Dm7 Dm9 Am C G Em
No tempo (freely played)
(Em9)
Harm.
39
(Gtr. 2 out)
Harm.

D
Tempo 1
Em
42
Gtr. 1
8 va
Bm
Bm11
fade in each note w/vol. knob
Gr. 2
(Let all notes ring)
44
Dm11
Am9
C
G
46
Em
Bm
Bm11
full
1/2
48
Dm11
Am
C
G
Let all notes ring

E
E5
B5
50
Rhythm fig. 1
Rhythm fig. 1
(w/truckloads o' distortion)
D5
A5
C
G
52
(end rhythm fig. 1 Gtr. 1)
(end rhythm fig. 1 Gtr. 2)
Yeah!
E5
Yeah
B5
don't
54

go! No! Don't look back! Just realize
D5
A5
C
G
56
(end rhythm fig. 1 Gtr. 1)
(end rhythm fig. 1 Gtr. 2)
58
E5
F Tempo II
♩=330
P.S.
feedback (w/bar)
sounding pitch: B
I've been robbed I've been fooled I intend now to make my own rules!
Gtr. 1, 2 E5
B5
D5
C♯5
C5
B5
G5
67
Rhythm fig. 2
(end rhythm fig. 2)
Danger's edge cut the line I've been down that road
75
E5
B5
D5

81
A5
Too
C5
many
G5
E5
times.
F#5
Rhythm fig. 3
86
E5
8va
w/feedback
sounding pitch: E
(end rhythm fig. 3)
91
F#5
Rhythm fig. 4

95
E5
(5)
(end rhythm fig. 4)
99
What's to fear.
Fear no more.
Show my conscience what fears for.
E5
B5
D5
C#5
C5
B5
G5
107
Now I know this is so real.
What's done is done so
E5
B5
D5
113
do as you will.
A5
C5
G5
E5
F#5
Rhythm fig. 3
118
E5
8va
A.H.
w/feedback
A.H.T
17
sounding pitch: E
(end rhythm fig. 3)

123
F#5
127
E5
G Solo
Tempo III ♩=165
Solo gtr.
131
E5
B5
Gtr. 2
133
D5
A5
C5 B5 A5 E5
down 5th string away from bridge
*trill w/left hand while sliding right hand

B5
D5
A5
C5 B5 A5
136
w/bar
w/bar
(Let all notes ring)
A.H.
Pinch
rake

H Tempo III
♩=178 F#5
E5
139
8 va
full

F#5
N.C.
143
8 va
semi-harm.
rake
full
full
full
P.S.
A.H.
A.H.
sounding pitch: B


I Tempo IV ♩=346
Gtr. 2 plays rhythm fig. 3 3x
F#5
147
8 va

151
E5
full
full
full
11/2
155
F#5
11/2
semi–harm.
Pinch
159
E5
162
F#5
semi– harm.
E5
169
A.H.
F#5
Gtr. 2 plays rhythm fig. 4
E5
A.H.
T
I'm
keeping
alive!
But go
J
178
E5
B5
Rhythm fig. 1
(w/truckloads o' distortion)

on. No! Don't look back. Just realize. Where you've
D5 A5 C G
180
(end Rhythm fig. 1 Gtr. 1)
(end Rhythm fig. 1 Gtr. 2)
gone. Where are you going to No! Life's not
E5 B5
182
(w/truckloads o' distortion)
Done with you you're only just begun to live you're life for you.
D5 A5 C G E5
184
A.H.
rit.
rit.